by Harry Howe Ransom

Harvard University Press, 309 pp., $9.95

Reviewed by Miles Copeland

"The intelligence operation," a Central Intelligence Agency instructor tells his pupils, "is in two parts: first, attaining the objective; second, concealing the fact that the objective has been attained. Usually we must also conceal the fact that we have made any efforts to attain the objective." In other words, when an espionage operation is successful the victim goes on about his business in happy ignorance of the fact that his secrets are known to the CIA. When a "political action" operation is successful the government against which it was conducted seems to have disintegrated or come to an end solely through natural causes.

"And if there is any danger at all of failure," the CIA instructor continues, "it is almost always better to leave the problem unsolved rather than risk failure or discovery." Theoretically, there should "almost always" be no failures.

But there have been failures: the Bay of Pigs, the U-2 incident, and one or two others. Taking into account the CIA's policy towards caution, it would seem reasonable to assume that for every failure there have been, say, ten or more successes. Reasonable people may be forgiven for suspecting the CIA of having brought about the downfall of Nkrumah and Sukarno, of having installed the military junta in Greece, of having thrown out Sihanouk. And, since the CIA—not only because of its bloopers but because of official admissions by its senior members—is known to have a capability for "political action," can the public be blamed for believing that the capability is activated now and again?

Reasonable or not, the public does so believe; the public's thirst for stories about international political intrigue being what it is, there has inevitably been a flood of trashy speculations purporting to reveal the true inside story. One of them, an encyclopedia of misinformation called *The Invisible Government*, stayed on the best-seller lists for several weeks. Others, notably some three or four books by Washington columnist Andrew Tully, have been less successful in sales but have made substantial contributions to the popular notion that the CIA is a law unto itself, that it freely interferes in the internal affairs of [illegible] democratically elected ones, to install anti-communist governments—with a special preference for non-democratic anti-communist governments.

Fortunately, such books have been weak in logic and unclear in rhetoric, and the mere fact that they have come under the heading of sensational journalism has tended to rob them of credibility. But one wonders. A *Washington Post* editorial writer spoke for many of us when he said, "It is obviously impossible for anyone who is not himself deep inside the intelligence community to write a comprehensive book about it, but won't someone please at least give us a basis for using common sense to judge what he hears?"

Harry Howe Ransom has provided such a basis. *The Intelligence Establishment* supplies exactly the background we need to understand why we must have an "intelligence community," what we can expect of it, and where its real dangers and weaknesses are. The late Allen Dulles, while he was director of CIA, used to keep a copy of Mr. Ransom's *Central Intelligence and National Security*, on a shelf behind his desk. Richard Helms, the present director, would be well advised to do the same with *The Intelligence Establishment*, which has been revised and enlarged from the earlier book. Although it is far from complimentary, at least the book sets forth the faults with which Mr. Helms is trying to grapple rather than the non-existent ones of which the Agency is accused. *The Intelligence Establishment* is, in fact, the only up-to-date serious study of the organization and effectiveness of our country's intelligence system.

Why have an "intelligence community" at all? This question, which seems so absurd to those who are members of it, has in fact been asked by Congressmen and journalists to whom "intelligence" connotes spies, saboteurs and political activists, and it deserves an answer in depth; even those who understand "intelligence" in its proper light do not often appreciate exactly why it is indispensable. Whether he gets it from the newspapers, from briefings by his subordinates or reports from consultants, any chief-of-state or president of a large corporation or head of any other kind of organization must have intelligence in order to fulfill his responsibilities. The primary function of the CIA has been to coordinate the whole intelli[illegible] or twelve separate services, to ensure [illegible] makers exactly the information they need, no more and no less, in order to make the right decisions."

"Information"—or "raw information," as intelligence analysts call it—may be good or bad, accurate or inaccurate, relevant or irrelevant, timely or out of date; "intelligence," on the other hand, is information that has been evaluated, correlated, boiled down to manageable dimensions, and put into reports which can be quickly and easily read. CIA's main function is to supervise the process. No one who understands management can question the assertion that some one agency must have this function; few question that it should be the CIA.

"A 'pure' doctrine of intelligence," says Mr. Ransom, "demands that intelligence officers 'present the facts' and play no role in policy choice." But he goes on to show how those who decide what facts to present are in a special position of influence. Indeed, "a 'pure' theory of decision making insists that if 'all the facts' are known, the optimum choice becomes apparent." (President Eisenhower used to insist that "all the facts" pertinent to a particular problem be presented to him in a report no longer than one page; he would then make his decision. A wag on his staff used to say, "If I could get in a position to write these one-page reports I could run the country.") It is this position of influence, rather than the occasional embarrassments we suffer from exploded clandestine operations, which draws Mr. Ransom's attention. Espionage and "special operations" services can cause occasional embarrassment, but they are dangerous only when under the direct control of an agency which can influence, if not actually make, policy.

With the eye of a management expert, as well as of a political scientist, Mr. Ransom sees a vast intelligence bureaucracy, topped by the CIA, which has grown up in great confusion over its purpose and functions, with the effect that "the government does not always know what it is doing in the intelligence field." He gives us the historical development of intelligence, including a chapter on British intelligence and our use of it as a model (the author spent a whole year in Britain gathering material), and then he gets down to how intelligence relates to decision making at top levels of our government, how the breakdown of decision-making responsibility at these levels results in the proliferation of [illegible] organizations under the CIA umbrella, how the com-

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